

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1155

INFO AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SEDU, PO

SUBJ: EDUCATION MINISTER RESIGNS AS UNIVERSITY CHAOS

DEGENERATES INTO VIOLENCE

REF: A. LISBON 3085 B. LISBON 3095

SUMMARY: PORTUGUESE UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, BESET BY SERIOUS PROBLEMS BEFORE APRIL 25, GROUND TO HALT WITH REVOLUTION AND HAS MADE ONLY TOKEN PROGRESS SINCE IN RETURNING TO NORMAL. REVOLUTIONARY-MINDED STUDENTS HAVE SOUGHT EXPLOIT CONFUSION AND PREVENT RESUMPTION OF COURSES. CAMPUS TURMOIL DENGNERATED INTO VIOLENCE IN CLOSING DAYS NOVEMBER, RESULTING IN RESIGNATION OF EDUCATION MINISTER. PRIME MINISTER HAS ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY TEMPORARILY FOR MINISTRY. STRONG HAND OF PM (OR OTHER MFA FIGURE) WILL BE NECESSARY IF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TO RECOVER FROM CURRENT MORASS. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE VITORINO MAGALHAES GODINHO RESIGNED ON NOV. 29. PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES REPORTEDLY WILL ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY HIMSELF FOR RUNNING
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MINISTRY, WITH ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES BEING DELEGATED

TO CURRENT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATION RUI GRACIO (SEE REF B FOR BIO).

2. MAGALHAES GODINHO'S RESIGNATION COMES ON HEELS (AND WAS PROBABLY PRECIPITATED BY) EVENTS AT UNIV. LISBON OF LAST FEW DAYS. GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF LAW STUDENTS CONVOKED EVENING NOV. 25 WAS DISORDERLY AFFAIR, PUNCTUNATED BY FISTFIGHTS; MEETING NOV. 26, WHICH WAS TO INCLUDE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS ONLY, ATTRACTED STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITY IN GENERAL AND SIMILARLY BROKE DOWN IN VIOLENCE; WORST EPISODES OCCURRED NIGHT OF 28TH-29TH, AS LIBRARY OF ECONOMICS FACULTY BECAME BATTLEFIELD FOR CONTESTING GROUPS OF STUDENTS, ONE OF WHICH KIDNAPPED AND INTERROGATED (WITH ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE) THREE MEMBERS OF OPPOSING GROUP.

3. DESPITE GENERALIZED CLIMATE OF CONFUSION, PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN RECURRING SCENES OF DISORDER APPEAR TO BE THREE: UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS AND OFFICIALS OF EDUCATION MINISTRY, WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO RESTORE ORDER AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE: COMMUNISTS (THROUGH OWN ORGANIZATION, UNION OF COMMUNIST STUDENTS, AS WELL AS COMMUNIST INFLUENCED NATIONAL UNION OF PORTUGUESE STUDENTS); WHO ARE SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT'S POSITION; AND MRPP-LED REVOLUTIONARIES, WHO SEEM INTENT ON EXPLOITING TURMOIL TO FURTHER POLITICIZE AND RADICALIZE STUDENT COMMUNITY. VIOLENT WORDS AND ACCUSATIONS BETWEEN MEMBERS LAST TWO GROUPS ESCALATED IN LAST TWO WEEKS, CULMINATING IN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE MENTIONED ABOVE.

4. ONE OF PRINCIPAL ISSUES IN CONTEST IS THAT OF "CIVIC SERVICE." IN LIGHT OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS AT UNIVERSITIES (CURRENT SHORTFALL OF PLACES IS ABOUT 15,000-20,000--SEE REFTEL A), GOP HAS PROPOSED THAT EXCESS STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CIVIC SERVICE, A PORTUGUESE EQUIVALENT OF VISTA. IN CONFORMITY WITH COMMUNIST PARTY'S (PCP) OVERALL POLICY OF IDENTIFYING ITSELF WITH AND SUPPORTING ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) PROGRAM, COMMUNISTS IN FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY AT UNIV. LISBON SUPPORTED CALL; MRPP OPPOSED. COMMUNIST STUDENTS STEPPED-UP DENUNCIATIONS OF MRPP, CLAIMING THIS FORMERLY SMALL GROUP OF RADICAL PETIT BOURGEOIS ANTI-COMMUNISTS HAD BECOME INFILTRATED BY REACTIONARIES AND ENJOYED ACTIVE SUPPORT OF FAR RIGHT. ATTEMPT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BY COMMUNIST MILITANTS TO TEAR DOWN TWO POSTERS ON UNIVERSITY GROUNDS WHICH INSULTED PCP, UNION OF COMMUNIST STUDENTS (UEC) AND COMMUNIST FRONT MOVEMENT OF WORKING YOUTH WAS EVENT THAT STARTED MOST SERIOUS OF INCIDENTS. (MRPP MILITANTS SEIZED THREE MEMBERS OF LATTER GROUP, HOLDING THEM CAPTIVE FOR SIX HOURS BEFORE COPCON FORCES INTERVENED TO RESTORE ORDER.)

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH PRE-APRIL 25 UNIVERSITY CONDITIONS WERE FAR FROM GOOD, NOTHING TRANSPIRING THEN APPROACHES CURRENT LEVEL OF CONFUSION AND CHAOS. FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER HAD IMPOSSIBLE JOB TO ACCOMPLISH. AS NOTED REFTEL A, TECHNOCRATS AT EDUCATION MINISTRY HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED NEED FOR APPOINTMENT OF STRONG FIGURE, POSSIBLY MFA OFFICER, TO HEAD MINISTRY. PRIME MINISTER'S WILLINGNESS TO SHOULDER HIMSELF, IF ONLY TEMPORARILY, RESPONSIBILITY FOR MINISTRY HINTS THAT GOP TOO NOW RECOGNIZES THIS NEED. PRIME MINISTER HAS ALREADY ISSUED PUBLIC WARNING TO STUDENTS. IN NOV. 21 NATIONALLY CARRIED TV INTERVIEW, GONCALVES SPOKE OUT AGAINST LEFTIST-ANARCHIST STUDENT GROUPS WHO WISHED TO BE NIETHER STUDENTS (BECAUSE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS TOOL OF BOURGEOISIE) NOR WORKERS (SINCE FRUIT OF WORKERS' LABOR IS EXPLOITED BY CAPITALIST SYSTEM) GONCALVES CALLED ON STUDENTS TO PROVIDE EXAMPLE FOR NATION AND PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT APPEAS ALONE, EVEN FROM HIGH MFA FIGURE WILL DO THE TRICK. UNIVERSITY SITUATION MAY GET GRIMMER BEFORE CORNER IS TURNED.

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